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HIGHLIGHTS:

Prospective Plantings
March 1 Grain Stocks
Ag Prices Received
Quarterly Hogs & Pigs

March 2005 Prospective Plantings

Montana **spring wheat** producers expect to seed 2.6 million acres in 2005, down 13 percent from last year. If realized, spring wheat intended seedings would be the lowest seeded acreage since 1991 when 2.6 million acres were also planted. **Winter wheat** seedings, at 2.15 million acres, are unchanged from the December estimate and are up 13 percent from last year. This is the largest winter wheat seeded acreage since 1996. Winter wheat conditions at the end of March 2005 were down slightly from a year ago as conditions were rated 1 percent very poor, 11 percent poor, 44 percent fair, 38 percent good and 6 percent excellent. Producers are expecting to plant 560,000 acres of **durum wheat** this spring, down 2 percent from last year. Adding the winter wheat seeded last fall to the other spring and durum wheat intended seedings totals 5.31 million acres of **all wheat** to be planted, down 160,000 acres from 2004. If realized, all wheat seedings would be the lowest since 1991 when 5.13 million acres were planted. The lack of precipitation in many areas of the State is a major concern for wheat producers.

Montana **barley** producers intend to plant

an estimated 950,000 acres, down 5 percent from the previous year and would be the lowest since 1953. The intended seeded acreage for **oats** is expected to be 90,000 acres, down 15,000 acres from the previous year and the lowest acreage since 1891. **Corn** growers intend to plant 71,000 acres, up 1,000 acres from last year. Acreage of **sugar beets** is intended to be 52,000 acres, down 3 percent from 2004. The area planted to **dry beans** is expected to be 14,000 acres, up 8 percent from last year. **Hay** growers are expected to harvest 2.5 million acres, unchanged from last year's figure.

Montana **canola** producers intend to plant 23,000 acres in 2005, up 7,000 acres from 2004. **Flaxseed** producers intend to plant 35,000 acres in 2005, up 15,000 acres from last year. Flaxseed planted acreage would be the highest since 1960 when 42,000 acres were planted.

U.S. **all wheat** planted area is expected to total 58.6 million acres in 2005, down 2 percent from 2004. If realized, this would be the lowest planted acreage since 1972. **Winter wheat** planted area for the 2005 crop is 41.6 million acres, down 4 percent from 2004. Of the total, about 30.5 million acres are hard red winter, 6.6 million acres are soft red winter, and 4.5 million acres are white winter. The 2005 other **spring wheat** planted acreage is estimated at 14.4 million, up 4 percent from last year. Of the total, about 13.7 million acres are hard red spring wheat. Area planted to **durum wheat** is

intended to total 2.61 million acres, up 2 percent from the previous year.

Barley growers in the U.S. intend to plant 3.97 million acres for 2005, down 12 percent from last year and, if realized, the lowest since barley planted acreage estimates began in 1926. Expected acreage declined from last year in the 4 largest barley-producing States. Of the top 10 barley States, Minnesota is the only State with increased planting intentions. U.S. **oats** acres seeded and to be seeded for the 2005 crop year are expected to total 4.27 million acres, up 4 percent from last year's planted area.

Corn growers in the United States intend to plant 81.4 million acres for all purposes in 2005, up 1 percent from 2004 and 4 percent above 2003. If realized, this would be largest corn acreage since 1985 when 83.4 million acres were planted for all purposes. (Continued on back page.)

The Montana 2005 prospective plantings and grain stocks estimates in this issue are the result of surveying approximately 2,000 Montana farmers in March. SPECIAL THANKS to those operators that were interviewed and responded to the survey.

Planted Acreage, 2003-2004 and Intended 2005 Montana and United States

| | Montana | | | | United States | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|-------|-------|---------|----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 05/04 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 05/04 |
| | Thousand Acres | | | Percent | Thousand Acres | | | Percent |
| All Wheat | 5,440 | 5,470 | 5,310 | 97 | 62,141 | 59,674 | 58,592 | 98 |
| Winter Wheat | 1,900 | 1,900 | 2,150 | 113 | 45,394 | 43,350 | 41,613 | 96 |
| Durum Wheat | 640 | 570 | 560 | 98 | 2,915 | 2,561 | 2,608 | 102 |
| Other Spring Wheat | 2,900 | 3,000 | 2,600 | 87 | 13,842 | 13,763 | 14,371 | 104 |
| Barley | 1,150 | 1,000 | 950 | 95 | 5,348 | 4,527 | 3,974 | 88 |
| Oats | 120 | 105 | 90 | 86 | 4,597 | 4,085 | 4,267 | 104 |
| Corn | 68 | 70 | 71 | 101 | 78,603 | 80,930 | 81,413 | 101 |
| Sugar Beets | 51.7 | 53.7 | 52.0 | 97 | 1,365.4 | 1,346.0 | 1,299.0 | 97 |
| All Dry Beans | 13.0 | 13.0 | 14.0 | 108 | 1,406.1 | 1,354.3 | 1,663.5 | 123 |
| All Hay Harvested | 2,450 | 2,500 | 2,500 | 100 | 63,383 | 61,916 | 62,940 | 102 |
| Canola | 28 | 15 | 23 | 153 | 1082 | 865 | 1,047 | 121 |
| Flaxseed | 17 | 20 | 35 | 175 | 595 | 523 | 919 | 176 |

March 1, 2005 Grain Stocks

Stocks of **all wheat** in Montana on March 1, 2005 were 88.6 million bushels, up 21 percent from March 1, 2004. All wheat stocks stored on the farm amounted to 67.0 million bushels, up 34 percent from a year ago. All wheat stored off farm amounted to 21.6 million bushels, down 7 percent from a year ago. All wheat disappearance for the December 2004-February 2005 quarter was up 8 percent from the same quarter last year to 51.0 million bushels, compared with 47.1 million bushels a year ago.

Barley stocks in all positions on March 1, 2005 were 26.1 million bushels, up 64 percent from a year ago. Barley stored on-farms was 16.5 million bushels, more than double last year's stocks of 8.0 million bushels. Off-farm barley storage was up 21 percent from a year ago to 9.6 million bushels. All barley disappearance during the December 2004-February 2005 quarter was up 21 percent from the same quarter a year ago to 12.2 million bushels, compared with 10.1 million bushels a year ago. **Oats** stocks in all positions were estimated at 1.5 million bushels, down 6 percent from last year. On-farm stocks of oats were 1.4 million bushels down 7 percent from 1.5 million bushels stored a year ago.

Oats stored off-farm was up 10 percent from last year to 110,000 bushels.

In the United States, **all wheat** stored in all positions on March 1, 2005 totaled 981 million bushels, down 4 percent from a year ago. On-farm stocks are estimated at 305 million bushels, up 18 percent from last year. Off-farm stocks, at 676 million bushels, are down 11 percent from a year ago. The December 2004 - February 2005 indicated disappearance is 449 million bushels, down 10 percent from the same period a year earlier.

U.S. **durum wheat** stocks in all positions on March 1, 2005 totaled 55.3 million bushels, up 25 percent from a year ago. On-farm stocks, at 35.2 million bushels, are up 42 percent from March 1, 2004. Off-farm stocks totaled 20.1 million bushels, up 3 percent from a year ago. The December 2004 - February 2005 indicated disappearance of 23.3 million bushels is up 3 percent from the same period a year earlier.

March 1, 2005 **barley** stocks in all positions for the U.S. totaled 191 million bushels, up 25 percent from March 1, 2004. On-farm stocks are estimated at 79.7 million bushels, 54 percent above a year ago. Off-farm stocks, at 111 million bushels, are 10 percent above March 1,

2004. Indicated disappearance during the December 2004 - February 2005 quarter totaled 55.3 million bushels, up 23 percent from the same period a year earlier.

U.S. **oats** stored in all positions on March 1, 2005 totaled 82.5 million bushels, 13 percent below the stocks on March 1, 2004. Of the total stocks on hand, 43.5 million bushels are stored on farms, 5 percent lower than a year ago. Off-farm stocks totaled 39.0 million bushels, 21 percent below a year earlier. Indicated disappearance during December 2004 - February 2005 totaled 22.4 million bushels, compared with 24.3 million bushels from the same period a year ago.

March 1, 2005 **corn** stocks in all positions for the Nation totaled 6.75 billion bushels, up 28 percent from March 1, 2004. This is the highest March 1 stocks level since 1988. Of the total stocks, 4.14 billion bushels are stored on farms, up 37 percent from a year earlier. Off-farm stocks, at 2.62 billion bushels, are up 17 percent from a year ago. The December 2004 - February 2005 indicated disappearance is 2.70 billion bushels, compared with 2.68 billion bushels during the same period last year.

March 1 Grain Stocks

| GRAIN and POSITION | MONTANA | | | | UNITED STATES | | |
|---|------------------|--------------|--------------|---------|------------------|---------------|-------------|
| | Mar. 1, 2004 | Dec. 1, 2004 | Mar. 1, 2005 | '05/'04 | Mar. 1, 2004 | Dec. 1, 2004* | Mar 1, 2005 |
| | Thousand Bushels | | | Percent | Thousand Bushels | | |
| ALL WHEAT | | | | | | | |
| On Farms | 50,000 | 116,000 | 67,000 | 134 | 257,890 | 531,020 | 304,710 |
| Off Farms 1/ | 23,200 | 23,640 | 21,630 | 93 | 762,727 | 899,306 | 676,304 |
| TOTAL | 73,200 | 139,640 | 88,630 | 121 | 1,020,617 | 1,430,326 | 981,014 |
| DURUM WHEAT | | | | | | | |
| On Farms | -- | -- | -- | -- | 24,800 | 51,800 | 35,200 |
| Off Farms 1/ | -- | -- | -- | -- | 19,447 | 26,805 | 20,096 |
| TOTAL | -- | -- | -- | -- | 44,247 | 78,605 | 55,296 |
| BARLEY | | | | | | | |
| On Farms | 8,000 | 29,000 | 16,500 | 206 | 51,700 | 130,700 | 79,680 |
| TOTAL | 15,970 | 38,340 | 26,120 | 164 | 152,886 | 245,976 | 190,681 |
| OATS | | | | | | | |
| On Farms | 1,500 | 1,900 | 1,400 | 93 | 45,600 | 60,400 | 43,500 |
| TOTAL | 1,600 | 2,030 | 1,510 | 94 | 95,014 | 104,913 | 82,526 |
| CORN | | | | | | | |
| On Farms | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3,030,000 | 6,144,000 | 4,137,000 |
| Off Farms 1/ | -- | -- | -- | -- | 2,241,459 | 3,306,598 | 2,616,738 |
| TOTAL | -- | -- | -- | -- | 5,271,459 | 9,450,598 | 6,753,738 |
| 1/ Terminals, mills, interior elevators. * Revised. -- Not available. | | | | | | | |

1/ Terminals, mills, interior elevators. * Revised. -- Not available.

February 2005 Agricultural Prices Received

February 2005 full month crop prices were mixed compared with January 2005. Montana's winter wheat average price was \$3.39 per bushel, down \$0.13 from the previous month; spring wheat prices dropped \$0.08 to \$3.77 per bushel; but durum wheat prices rose \$0.08 to \$3.76 per bushel. Feed barley prices decreased \$0.06 from the previous month to \$1.61, but malt barley prices rose \$0.07 to \$3.13 per bushel.

The mid-March price for alfalfa hay rose \$2.00 to \$76.00 per ton and all other hay increased \$3.00 to \$69.00 per ton. Mid-March grain prices were mostly higher than the previous month with winter wheat price averaging \$3.38 per bushel, spring wheat was \$4.03 per bushel, durum wheat was \$3.84 per bushel, and feed

barley was \$1.74 per bushel.

Livestock prices for the full month of February were mixed from the previous month. Steer and heifer prices decreased \$1.00 to \$106.00 per cwt, while cows increased \$2.90 to \$54.40. The average price for calves was unchanged at \$127.00 per cwt. Sheep prices dropped \$6.60 to \$52.90 per cwt, but lamb prices rose \$6.00 to a new record high of \$132.00 per cwt. Milk prices increased \$0.30 per cwt from last month to \$16.00 per cwt. Steer and heifer prices for mid-March averaged \$106.00 per cwt; cows averaged \$55.70 per cwt; calves averaged \$131.00 per cwt; and milk prices averaged \$15.30 per cwt.

Nationally, prices for February and changes from January were as follows: winter wheat was \$3.27, unchanged from January, spring wheat was \$3.50, down

\$0.10; durum wheat was \$3.71, up \$0.09; the all barley price was \$2.37, down \$0.05, and steer and heifer prices were \$93.30, down \$1.10 per cwt.

The U.S. mid-March winter wheat price was \$3.44 per bushel, spring wheat was \$3.65 per bushel, durum wheat was \$3.64 per bushel, all wheat was \$3.53 per bushel, malt barley was \$2.76 per bushel, feed barley was \$1.77 per bushel, and all barley was \$2.48. Steer and heifer prices were \$96.30 per cwt, cow prices were \$53.60, calves were \$132.00 per cwt, all hog prices were \$51.50 per cwt, and all egg prices were \$0.53 per dozen.

The preliminary All Farm Products Index of Prices Received by Farmers in March, at 118, based on 1990-92=100, is 4 points (3.5 percent) above the February Index.

United States Index Summary

| INDEX (1990-92=100) | February 2004 | March 2004 | February 2005 | March 2005 |
|--|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|
| Prices Received | 116 | 121 | 114 | 118 |
| Prices Paid, Interest, Taxes, & Farm Wage Rates 1/ | 131 | 132 | 135 | 135 |
| Ratio 2/ | 89 | 92 | 84 | 87 |

1/ Prices paid indexes (1990-92=100) published monthly. 2/ Ratio of index of prices received by farmers to index of prices paid.

Montana Average Farm Prices Received

| Commodity | UNIT | Monthly Average | | | | Change From Previous | | Mid-Month Average | |
|------------------|------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|-------------------|---------------|
| | | Montana | | | U.S. | Month | Year | Montana | U.S. |
| | | Feb. 2004 | Jan. 2005 | Feb. 2005 | Feb. 2005 | Jan. 2005 | Feb. 2004 | Mar. 15, 2005 | Mar. 15, 2005 |
| | | Dollars | | | | | | | |
| Winter Wheat | Bu. | 3.60 | 3.52 | 3.39 | 3.27 | -0.13 | -0.21 | 3.38 | 3.44 |
| Durum Wheat | Bu. | 3.99 | 3.68 | 3.76 | 3.71 | +0.08 | -0.23 | 3.84 | 3.64 |
| Spring Wheat | Bu. | 3.93 | 3.85 | 3.77 | 3.50 | -0.08 | -0.16 | 4.03 | 3.65 |
| All Wheat | Bu. | 3.81 | 3.69 | 3.61 | 3.36 | -0.08 | -0.20 | 3.74 | 3.53 |
| Barley, All | Bu. | 2.98 | 2.77 | 2.77 | 2.37 | NC | -0.21 | 2.93 | 2.48 |
| Feed Barley | Bu. | 2.11 | 1.67 | 1.61 | 1.62 | -0.06 | -0.50 | 1.74 | 1.77 |
| Malt Barley | Bu. | 3.43 | 3.06 | 3.13 | 2.64 | +0.07 | -0.30 | N/A | 2.76 |
| Oats | Bu. | 1.66 | N/A | N/A | 1.66 | NA | N/A | N/A | 1.60 |
| Alfalfa Hay | Ton | 75.00 | 78.00 | 74.00 | 91.90 | -4.00 | -1.00 | 76.00 | 96.40 |
| All Other Hay | Ton | 66.00 | 68.00 | 66.00 | 70.00 | -2.00 | NC | 69.00 | 70.40 |
| All Hay Baled | Ton | 73.00 | 76.00 | 72.00 | 84.70 | -4.00 | -1.00 | 74.00 | 89.10 |
| Steers & Heifers | Cwt | 92.30 | 107.00 | 106.00 | 93.30 | -1.00 | +13.70 | 106.00 | 96.30 |
| Cows | Cwt | 47.60 | 51.50 | 54.40 | 52.40 | +2.90 | +6.80 | 55.70 | 53.60 |
| Beef Cattle 1/ | Cwt | 83.40 | 95.90 | 93.60 | 89.00 | -2.30 | +10.20 | 89.90 | 91.90 |
| Calves | Cwt | 112.00 | 127.00 | 127.00 | 128.00 | NC | +15.00 | 131.00 | 132.00 |
| Sheep 2/ | Cwt | 39.00 | 59.50 | 52.90 | 51.30 | -6.60 | +13.90 | N/A | N/A |
| Lambs 2/ | Cwt | 123.00 | 126.00 | 132.00 | 114.00 | +6.00 | +9.00 | N/A | N/A |
| All Milk | Cwt | 13.00 | 15.70 | 16.00 | 15.50 | +0.30 | +3.00 | 15.30 | 15.60 |

1/ Composite of steers, heifers, and cows. 2/ Mid-month prices for sheep and lambs discontinued.

Prospective Plantings (continued)

U.S. hay producers expect to harvest 62.9 million acres of **all hay** in 2005, up 2 percent from last year. The two States with the largest expected increases are New York, which is up 470,000 acres from last year, and South Dakota, which is up 300,000 acres.

Sugar beets area planted for the 2005 crop year is expected to total 1.30 million acres, 3 percent below the 2004 planted acreage. Intended plantings decreased from last year in all States, except North Dakota and Colorado.

Prospective 2005 planting of **dry beans** in the U.S. totals 1.66 million acres, up 23 percent from last year and 18 percent above 2 years ago. High prices for the 2004 crop and low inventories contributed to the expected increase in planted acres. Thirteen States expect to plant more dry bean acres than a year ago and 3 States expect planted acres to be unchanged, while acreage in Texas is expected to be down from 2004.

Canola producers intend to plant 1.05 million acres in 2005, up 21 percent from 2004, the first increase in canola acreage since 2000. Producers in North Dakota,

the leading canola State, intend to plant 950,000 acres, up from 780,000 acres a year ago.

Flaxseed producers expect to plant 919,000 acres in 2005, up 76 percent from last year. If realized, this would be the largest planted area since 1979 when 922,000 acres were planted. Each of the four States in the estimating program (Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota) are showing significant increases from 2004 as producers are hoping to take advantage of high flaxseed prices. North Dakota growers intend to plant 850,000 acres in 2005, up 73 percent from 2004.

U.S. Hog Inventory

U.S. inventory of all hogs and pigs on March 1, 2005 was 59.9 million head. This was up 1 percent from March 1, 2004, but down 1 percent from December 1, 2004.

Breeding inventory, at 5.94 million head, was down slightly from both March 1, 2004 and last quarter. Market hog inventory, at 54.0 million head, was up 1 percent from last year, but down 1 percent from last quarter.

The December 2004 - February 2005 U.S. pig crop, at 25.5 million head, was up 2 percent from 2004 and up 4 percent from 2003. Sows farrowing during this period totaled 2.85 million head, up 1 percent from last year. The sows farrowed during this quarter represented 48 percent of the breeding herd. The average pigs saved per litter was 8.94 for the December 2004 -February 2005 period, compared to 8.85 last year. Pigs saved per litter by size of operation ranged from 7.50 for operations with 1-99 hogs to 9.00 for operations with more than 5,000 hogs and pigs.

U.S. hog producers intend to have 2.87 million sows farrowed during the March-May 2005 quarter, unchanged from the actual farrowings during the same period in 2004, but 1 percent below 2003. Intended farrowings for June-August 2005, at 2.88 million sows, are down 1 percent from the same period in both 2004 and 2003.

The total number of hogs under contract, owned by operations with over 5,000 head, but raised by contractees, accounted for 39 percent of the total U.S. hog inventory, up from 37 percent last year.

COMING IN NEXT REPORTER

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Montana's Rank | Red Meat Production |
| Potato Stocks | Egg Production |
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| Specialty Crops County Est. | |

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